

INTELLIGENT DESIGN: THE CHALLENGE TO SCIENCE & THE IMPORTANCE TO APOLOGETICS

Douglas Groothuis, Ph.D., Denver Seminary
January 2003

I. What Do You See?

- A. Consider a very complicated device like an outboard motor
 - 1. Universal joint, propeller, drive shaft, rotor, brushing—all of which are needed for its function, none of which are expendable
 - 2. Is this a new motor for a boat or a car or an airplane?
 - 3. You are looking under a high-powered microscope at something not built by humans
 - 4. Bacterial flagellum; only recently discovered as a molecular machine. See Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (The Free Press, 1996), 70-73
- B. The present establishment in science insists that this is not designed
- C. It is the product of impersonal, unintelligent, non-supernatural, and non-directive forces working over millions of years through natural selection. Darwin's command!
- D. Yet some are challenging this claim in the name of science and reason

II. Christian Witness and the Place of Science

- A. Christianity at the origins of modern science: Blaise Pascal. See Douglas Groothuis, *On Pascal* (Wadsworth, 2002)
- B. The secularization of science. God banished from scientific explanation, especially after Darwin's theory of evolution through natural selection: *Origin of Species* (1859)
- C. Contemporary culture: Science as a revealer of truth; religion as mere belief
- D. But "All truth is God's truth." We must break out of the intellectual ghetto
- E. Importance of thinking well as Christians (Matthew 22:37-39; Romans 12:2) Jesus as our model. See Douglas Groothuis, *On Jesus* (Wadsworth, 2002), chapter two

III. Theology and Science: Warfare or Harmony?

- A. The reality of general revelation (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1-2): The Book of Nature
- B. Special revelation (2 Timothy 3:15-6): The Book of Scripture
- C. Harmonizing the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. See J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City* (Baker, 1987), chapter eight, and *Christianity and the Nature of Science* (Baker, 1989)
- D. The challenge of Darwinism: *philosophical materialism posing as empirical science*. Noted scientist and evolutionist Richard Lewontin quoted in *The New York Review of Books*, Jan 9, 1997: “We cannot let a divine foot in the door.”

IV. The Philosophy of Science and Philosophical Materialism (Naturalism)

- A. What is science? The scientific method?
- B. There is no agreed upon definition of science or the scientific method
- C. However, science is the study of the empirical world by means of experiments and theoretical reasoning
- D. Must science be naturalistic (exclude intelligent causes of nature phenomena)?
- E. Fear of “the god of the gaps” as a “science-stopper”
- F. Answering the fear: explain natural phenomena according to what we know, not what we don’t know. Based on increased knowledge of the natural world, particularly the structure of life
- G. What would falsify a naturalistic account of science in any discipline? Anything?

V. The Intelligent Design (ID) Project (Research Program)

- A. Negative case: Bring Darwinism into doubt scientifically. See Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*, InterVarsity Press, 1997

Lack of positive evidence: see Jonathon Wells, *Icons of Evolution* (Regnery, 2002). See <http://www.iconsofevolution.com>
- B. Positive case: reinstate intelligent causes as compelling *scientific* explanations for natural phenomena; break the intellectual monopoly of philosophical materialism

- C. Appeal to the best explanation, not directly to the Bible—or to any other religious source
- D. Different from “scientific creationism” (Institute for Creation Research); doesn’t address age of earth, the flood, or specific interpretations of Genesis per se
- E. Leaves open the possibility of God as the designer of certain aspects of nature
- F. The larger intelligent design argument (cosmic constants).
 - 1. The fine-tuning of the universe to sustain life: the strong anthropic principle
 - 2. Chance doesn’t have a chance to account for it. Weak anthropic principle?
 - 3. Intelligent designer is a better explanation for the varied phenomena
 - 4. The “many universes” objection to fine-tuning. Naturalistic desperation.
- G. The specific organism intelligent design argument
 - 1. William Dembski’s design filter: rule out (a) chance (b) natural law; then (c) intelligent design is the best explanation
 - 2. “Specified complexity” as the mark of design: employed in other disciplines: archaeology, cryptology, forensics, SETI, etc. See William Dembski, “Science and Design” at: <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9810/articles/dembski.html>

“Contact” (1995 movie) example: specified complexity from outer space
 - 3. Origin of life as an information system. “The information problem.” See Neal Broom, *How Blind the Watchmaker?* (InterVarsity, 2001)
 - 4. The bacterial flagellum as “irreducibly complex”—every part needed for function; no less complex precursor would have the needed function: the mousetrap principle
 - 5. This counters a Darwinian explanation of gradual, beneficial change. See Michael Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box*, chapter one
 - 6. Other examples of “irreducible complexity”: cilium, blood clotting cascade. See Behe. *Darwin’s Black Box*, Part II

VI. Intelligent Design and Christian Apologetics (1 Peter 3:15-17; Jude 3)

- A. Challenges materialism as the only reliable pattern of scientific explanation
- B. Intelligent design opens the door to theism as the best explanation of natural phenomena: relearning to read “the book of nature,” overcoming naturalistic dyslexia
- C. Should be taught, with evolution, in the public schools: “Teach the controversy!”
- D. Intelligent design opens the door to Christian theism (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-2)
- E. Other arguments also needed for a full-orbed apologetic of Christianity as objectively true, pertinent, and rationally powerful

Other Resources on Intelligent Design and Related Topics:

1. William Dembski and James Kushiner, *Signs of Intelligence*, Brazos Press, 2001. Collection of excellent essays explaining the nature and purpose of the Intelligent Design movement.

2. William Dembski, *Intelligent Design*, InterVarsity Press, 1999. Thorough, integrated treatment.

3. William Dembski, editor, *Mere Creation*, InterVarsity Press, 1998. Large, scholarly work.

4. Douglas Groothuis and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis web page: <http://www.ivpress.com/groothuis/> Much material on Christian apologetics, ethics, gender, and contemporary culture.

5. Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay*, InterVarsity, 2000. Challenges postmodernism and affirms objective, universal, and absolute biblical truth in the face of challenges.

6. Douglas Groothuis’s Intelligent Design Annotated Bibliography at: <http://www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles02/0400/0401.php>

7. The Discovery Institute web page: <http://www.discovery.org> . Click the Institute for Science and Culture.

8. Access Research Network (ARN) web page: <http://www.arn.org> . Many excellent resources on ID.